

THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A messaging interface for an interactive pager, comprising:
  - a housing;
  - a message processing circuit located within the housing;
  - a user interface located at least partly within the housing that is configured to convey a message that is associated with a text message between a user of the interactive pager and the message processing circuit; and
  - a communications circuit that is coupled to the message processing circuit and that is configured to convey the text message between the message processing circuit and the interactive pager.
2. The messaging interface of Claim 1, wherein the user interface comprises a keypad.
3. The messaging interface of Claim 2, wherein at least some of the keys on the keypad are associated with a plurality of pre-defined text messages.
4. The messaging interface of Claim 1, wherein the user interface comprises a microphone, the message comprises an audio message received via the microphone, and the message processing circuit includes a voice recognition circuit that is configured to convert the audio message into the text message.
5. The messaging interface of Claim 4, further comprising a memory storage device located within the housing that stores a plurality of pre-defined text messages and the audio message comprises a command that selects one of the plurality of pre-defined text messages.
6. The messaging interface of Claim 1, wherein the user interface comprises a speaker and an associated driving circuit and the message processing circuit comprises a voice synthesis circuit that is configured to convert the text message into an electronic signal that is played through the speaker.
7. The messaging interface of Claim 6, wherein the speaker is part of an automobile stereo system.

8. The messaging interface of Claim 1, further comprising a docking cradle, and wherein the communications circuit comprises a communications port.

9. The messaging interface of Claim 1, wherein the messaging interface is powered via an external power supply.

10. The messaging interface of Claim 1, further comprising a power supply located within the housing.

11. The messaging interface of Claim 1, further comprising a memory storage device located within the housing that is configured to store a plurality of pre-defined text messages.

12. The messaging interface of Claim 11, wherein at least some of the plurality of pre-defined text messages comprise pre-defined messages that are specified by the user of the interactive pager.

13. The messaging interface of Claim 11, wherein at least some of the plurality of pre-defined text messages comprise factory pre-set pre-defined messages.

14. The messaging interface of Claim 1, wherein the housing includes a docking cradle that is configured to mate with the interactive pager.

15. A messaging interface for an interactive pager, comprising:  
a housing;  
a microphone located within the housing;  
a voice recognition circuit located within the housing that is configured to convert an audio signal received by the microphone into a text message; and  
a communications circuit in the housing that is configured to forward the text message from the voice recognition circuit to the interactive pager.

16. The messaging interface of Claim 15, further comprising a memory storage device located within the housing that stores a plurality of pre-defined text messages, wherein at least some of the plurality of pre-defined messages are forwarded to the interactive pager in response to a voice command.

17. The messaging interface of Claim 16, further comprising a keypad having a plurality of keys that are associated with at least some of the plurality of pre-defined text messages.

18. The messaging interface of Claim 15, further comprising a speaker and a voice synthesis circuit that is configured to convert a text message received by the interactive pager into an electronic signal that is played through the speaker.

19. The messaging interface of Claim 15, wherein the housing includes a docking cradle that is configured to mate with the interactive pager, and wherein the communications circuit comprises a communications port.

20. The messaging interface of Claim 15, further comprising a connection that draws power from a DC power source in an automobile.

21. A messaging interface for an interactive pager, comprising:  
a housing;  
a memory storage device within the housing, the memory storage device containing a plurality of pre-defined text messages;  
a plurality of user selectable indicia provided on the housing, a respective one of which is associated with a respective one of the plurality of pre-defined text messages; and  
a communications circuit configured to forward one of the plurality of pre-defined text messages from the messaging interface to the interactive pager in response to the selection of one of the plurality of user selectable indicia.

22. The messaging interface of Claim 21, wherein the plurality of user selectable indicia comprise a plurality of buttons.

23. The messaging interface of Claim 22, wherein at least some of the plurality of buttons are shaped differently than other of the plurality of buttons.

24. The messaging interface of Claim 22, wherein the top surface of at least some of the plurality of buttons are configured differently than the top surface of other of the plurality of buttons.

25. The messaging interface of Claim 22, further comprising a backlight that illuminates one or more of the plurality of buttons.

26. The messaging interface of Claim 25, wherein the messaging interface further comprises a photo detector, and wherein the backlight is responsive to a signal from the photo detector.

27. The messaging interface of Claim 21, wherein one of the plurality of user selectable indicia activates a SEND command.

28. The messaging interface of Claim 21, wherein repeatedly selecting one of the plurality of user selectable indicia within a predetermined time period activates a SEND command.

29. The messaging interface of Claim 21, further comprising a microphone and a voice recognition circuit that is configured to convert an audio signal input via the microphone into a text message, and wherein the communications circuit is further configured to forward the text message provided by the voice recognition circuit to the interactive pager.

30. The messaging interface of Claim 29, wherein the text message provided by the voice recognition circuit may comprise one of the plurality of pre-defined text messages.

31. The messaging interface of Claim 22, further comprising a speaker and a voice synthesis circuit that is configured to convert a text message received by the interactive pager into an electronic signal that is played through the speaker.

32. The messaging interface of Claim 31, wherein at least one of the plurality of buttons may be used to cause the voice synthesis circuit to output through the speaker a synthesized voice signal that reads identifying information associated with a received text message.

33. The messaging interface of Claim 21, wherein the housing includes a docking cradle that is configured to mate with the interactive pager, and wherein the communications circuit comprises a communications port.

34. A messaging interface for an interactive pager, comprising:  
a housing;  
a voice synthesis circuit located within the housing that is configured to convert a text message into an audio signal;  
a speaker responsive to the voice synthesis circuit; and  
a communications circuit, located at least partly within the housing, that is coupled to the voice synthesis circuit and that is configured to forward the text message from the interactive pager to the voice synthesis circuit.

35. The messaging interface of Claim 34, wherein the speaker is part of an automobile stereo system.

36. The messaging interface of Claim 34, further comprising a microphone and a voice recognition circuit that is configured to convert an audio signal input via the microphone into a second text message, and wherein the communications circuit is further configured to forward the second text message provided by the voice recognition circuit to the interactive pager.

37. The messaging interface of Claim 36, wherein the messaging interface further includes a memory storage device located within the housing that stores a plurality of pre-defined text messages, and wherein the voice recognition circuit is configured to forward one of the plurality of pre-defined messages to the interactive pager in response to the audio signal input via the microphone.

38. The messaging interface of Claim 36, wherein the voice synthesis circuit is configured to play back a message input via the microphone before the message input via the microphone is forwarded as a text message to the interactive pager.

39. The messaging interface of Claim 34, wherein the messaging interface further includes a keypad having a plurality of keys and a memory storage device located within the housing that stores a plurality of pre-defined text messages, and wherein at least some of the plurality of keys may be used to select respective of the plurality of pre-defined text messages.

40. A method of responding to a text message, the method comprising:  
receiving the text message on an interactive pager;  
accepting a command at an external messaging interface for the interactive pager;  
selecting from a plurality of pre-defined text messages stored in a memory storage device resident on the external messaging interface a pre-defined text message that corresponds to the entered command;  
forwarding the selected pre-defined text message from the memory storage device to the interactive pager; and  
transmitting from the interactive pager the selected pre-defined text message as a response to the text message.

41. The method of Claim 40, wherein entering a command into an external messaging interface for the interactive pager comprises stating the command into a microphone associated with the external messaging interface.

42. The method of Claim 41, wherein selecting from the plurality of pre-defined text messages a pre-defined text message that corresponds to the entered command comprises comparing an audio signal associated with the entered command to a plurality of pre-stored signals, selecting the pre-stored signal that has a highest degree of correlation with the audio signal, and selecting the pre-defined text message that is associated with the selected pre-stored signal.

43. The method of Claim 40, wherein entering a command into an external messaging interface for the interactive pager comprises selecting a button provided on the external messaging interface.

44. The method of Claim 40, further comprising notifying a user of the interactive pager that the text message has been received.

45. A method of outputting a text message received on an interactive pager to a user of the interactive pager, the method comprising:  
receiving the text message on the interactive pager;  
forwarding the received text message over a communications link to an external messaging interface;

using a voice synthesis circuit resident on the external messaging interface to convert the received text message into an electronic signal; and

sending the electronic signal to a speaker that outputs the electronic signal as an audio message.